

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

FBI loses some of its shine

The hunt for the assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has taken some odd turns, and one of the more unusual ones is the way the Justice Department and its agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, have been behaving.

Immediately after the killing Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark exuded optimism about an arrest. "We are very close," he said. A few days later he said he hoped to provide a picture of the suspect. But it was not until a week after the murder that the FBI inadvertently disclosed the name of Eric Starvo Galt.

And so it has gone since April 4. Clark's optimism has faded, and the FBI has seemed almost intent on keeping the public confused.

The FBI's image as the smoothest man-hunting agency was tarnished by the length of time taken to identify the fingerprints of Galt as those of ex-convict James Earl Ray. It was 15 days after the assassination. In question is

whether it really took that long or whether the FBI was withholding the information.

It was not until Sunday that the FBI put Galt or Ray on its most wanted list. The success of the list in apprehending wanted persons over the years has been good. It is hard to understand why the description and photo of Galt were not released as soon as they were uncovered.

The FBI could never be accused of being loose-lipped, but the most wanted list was a creation of its director, J. Edgar Hoover. He has always been proud of the role it has played in apprehending those unfortunate enough to be listed.

We wonder if the recent policy adopted by the American Bar Assn. against pre-trial publicity has unduly influenced the FBI. If this is the case, the results are plain enough. The public linking of Galt and Ray was made about two weeks after the killing, and no one has yet been apprehended.

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